

Final more detailed report of our recent WFWP EU Session in Vienna, Austria

Carolyn Handschin
May 14, 2018



Here is now the final more detailed report and more photos of our recent WFWP EU Session in Vienna, on the theme 'Values Education and Healthy Families – Fostering an Environment for Prosperity, Citizenship and Interreligious Harmony':

**Toward Interdependence and Mutual Prosperity:
The Role of Religious Leaders and Parliamentarians
Parkhotel Schönbrunn April 28 – 29, 2018 Vienna, Austria**

WFWP Session:

Session IV: Beyond Coexistence: Dealing with the Challenges of Interdependence - (Four Concurrent Sessions)

A. Values Education and Healthy Families – Fostering an Environment for Prosperity, Citizenship and Interreligious Harmony

Building a peaceful world of co-prosperity and shared values has long been the goal of religion, politics and educational institutions. In a stable, loving family, individuals may naturally develop capacities for love, respect, communication, cooperation, service, conflict resolution, forgiveness and other social skills that are relevant to life in the wider society. How can this universal principle be applied and extended to encourage harmonious social relations and partnerships for peace in our communities and in the family of nations?



The impressive and diverse speaker panel ensured that the topic was examined from different viewpoints including educational as well as political, civic and religious leadership.

The session was chaired by Carolyn Handschin, UN Office Director, Women's Federation for World Peace, International.

Prof. Yeon Ah Moon, WFWPI President, warmly welcomed everybody also on behalf of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, Co-Founder of WFWP. She spoke of creating a culture of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universally shared values. To make our peace culture sustainable at a time when the selfishness of nations pushes harmony away, we must look to family as the basic unit of all human organizations. While the participation of women is needed everywhere, the highest priority is educating our society with a righteous value system and love to motivate. However, since we cannot bring about the required changes by ourselves only, she invited everybody to share their thoughts, activities and proposals to create a network of like-minded leaders coming from the different fields.

Hon. Dr. Vasilika Hysi, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, Albania focused her statement on the responsibility of parliamentarians. She pointed towards Albania as a good model of religious harmony among the three main religions there - Islam, Catholicism and Orthodox faith - but stressed that it must be constantly defended and strengthened in light of the potential threats of radicalism and extremism. This requires efforts by all and including Parliamentarians, she defined six areas where MP's must be vigilant:



Legislation of peace incl. by-laws and legal measures to supervise its implementation; Promote dialogue and joint activities on local and national levels to challenge racist stereotypes and prejudice; Adopt measures that reduce inequality, poverty and poor education; Encourage social media platforms to self-regulate to curb hate speech on social networks; Respond with legal measures as well as collaborate with religious communities to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation.

Hon. Nina Nováková, Member of Parliament (2013-2017), Czech Republic, is currently working with civil society in defence of family values and in search of solutions to current threats. She spoke about the threat to a healthy society in current Europe coming from the influence of pragmatism, hedonism and bureaucracy: 'pragmatism' with its uncritical belief in technology while ignoring religious values, 'hedonism' with its denial of time-honored values and worship of instant gratification, and 'bureaucracy' as a dehumanized system of regulation. All three ignore ethical consideration.

To counter these trends, she considers the traditional family as the basic structure and environment where virtues, relationship skills and accountability can be acquired naturally.

She stressed fidelity as a crucial virtue which cultivates empathy and helps to develop a sense of belonging within the family unit. Only the safe environment of the traditional family provides the breeding ground to develop a healthy conscience, commitment and true freedom to love deeply and live virtuously. No society can thrive without fidelity at its core.

Rev. Ivo Sasek, President, Organische Christus Generation (OCG), Switzerland, is a pastor, writer and founder of a media network. He was supported by his wife Anne-Marie. They have 11 children. He really values the traditional family and the role of women. He spoke about the importance of understanding that harmony on all levels is possible, in line with Jesus' instruction that we 'should be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect'. The problem is we don't believe in it, but Jesus taught us that God does live through every person. Speaking in metaphor and parable, he referred to humanity's need to live together in harmony referring to the animal kingdom (fish, birds and ants) and their need for community for survival.

When people change from self-absorption to concern for others, quality of life and breadth of accomplishment changes dramatically. We have to learn to live together, as one body, and with God as our centre. This is an organic life-style that is realistically attainable, and it embodies the principle of perfection that Jesus spoke about.

When practising this connection, incredible insight comes to solve problems - not through ideology, but by living based on our innate common core.



Ms. Tahirih Danesh, Senior Programme Consultant, Ward and Brown Foundation, United Kingdom, is also a human rights researcher and activist. As a member of the Bahai faith, and raised in the Islamic Republic of Iran, she is a survivor of serious human rights violations, including torture since age 9. She survived by being smuggled out to freedom at age 14, and then turned to human rights.

There are two pillars to human rights, legislation and education. We need to form families that last. The millennial generation is different from their parents. The internet has transitioned the younger generation from seeking to accumulate material values to the intangible, seeking to accumulating experiences instead (metaphysical realm). Spirituality has become a priority, with its search for authenticity and becoming one's true self. Millennials today are more influenced by thought leaders like celebrities and through the media. If we want our families to work, we need to be aware of this.

In order to have healthy value-based families, we need to redefine the bonds of intimacy based on love, human rights and responsibilities: protection of my right is your responsibility – and your right is my responsibility to protect. This will re-shape the entire society towards goodness.

Almost 20 minutes of discussion with the audience provided opportunity for many views to be shared.

To conclude, Chair Carolyn Handschin encouraged everybody to network and to strategize together to bring about substantial changes in our communities.

